

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00

XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 DRC-01

STR-08 /175 W

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R 121831Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7935

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 01951

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UK, EEC

SUBJECT: WOULD A LABOR GOVERNMENT REALLY TAKE
BRITAIN OUT OF EC?

1. SUMMARY: YES, A LABOR GOVERNMENT MIGHT WELL TAKE
BRITAIN OUT. END SUMMARY

2. THE LABOR PARTY'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON BRITISH MEMBER-
SHIP OF THE EC IS THAT A LABOR GOVERNMENT WOULD "RE-
NEGOTIATE" THE TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP AND THEN SUBMIT
THE RESULTS TO THE ELECTORATE FOR APPROVAL OR REJECTION.

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THIS FORMULA WAS DEvised BY HAROLD WILSON AND ADOPTED

AT THE PARTY'S 1972 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AS A MEANS OF PAPERING OVER THE SPLIT BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-MARKETEERS WITHIN THE PARTY.

3. IN ACCEPTING THE COMPROMISE, PRO-MARKETEERS COMFORTED THEMSELVES WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT LABOR WOULD NOT RETURN TO OFFICE UNTIL MID-1975, THAT WITHDRAWAL BY THEN WOULD BE ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY TOO COSTLY, AND THAT WILSON WOULD SIMPLY ENGAGE IN A PROLONGED CHARADE OF RE-NEGOTIATION AND THEN DECLARE THE RESULTS SATISFACTORY. THE ANTI-MARKETEERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, RECKONED THAT THE SWEEPING CONDITIONS FOR RE-NEGOTIATION LAID DOWN BY THE PARTY WOULD BE UNACCEPTABLE TO BRITAIN'S PARTNERS IN THE EC, AND THAT IN ANY EVENT, IF THE ISSUE WERE SUBMITTED TO A REFERENDUM, THE BRITISH PEOPLE WOULD VOTE TO WITHDRAW.

4. SINCE THE 1972 CONFERENCE, OPINION WITHIN THE PARTY, REINFORCED BY THE LACK OF VISIBLE BENEFITS FROM THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF MEMBERSHIP, HAS GROWN STEADILY MORE HOSTILE TOWARDS THE EEC. BY THE 1973 CONFERENCE, THE ANTI-MARKETEERS COMMANDED AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATES AND STOPPED SHORT OF ADOPTING A POLICY OF OUTRIGHT WITHDRAWAL SOLELY BECAUSE THEY DID NOT WANT TO DRIVE THE PRO-MARKETEERS OUT OF THE PARTY DURING THE RUN-UP TO A GENERAL ELECTION.

5. THE SITUATION AFTER THE ELECTION, HOWEVER, WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERED. OF THE 69 LABOR MPS WHO WENT INTO THE GOVERNMENT LOBBIES IN THE CRITICAL VOTE OF OCTOBER 28, 1971, AT LEAST 15 AND PROBABLY MORE WILL NOT BE IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP). THE REMAINDER WILL BE UNDER FAR MORE INTENSE PRESSURE THAN THEY WERE IN 1971 NOT TO DEFY PARTY DISCIPLINE A SECOND TIME. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT MANY OF THEM WOULD BE READY TO SPLIT THE PARTY AGAIN AND BRING DOWN A LABOR GOVERNMENT SOLELY FOR THE SAKE OF KEEPING BRITAIN IN THE EEC.

6. IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE ANY LABOR POLITICIAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 01951

STOOD UP PUBLICLY TO DEFEND BRITISH MEMBERSHIP. ANTI-MARKETEERS ARE INCREASINGLY UNRESTRAINED IN THEIR CRITICISMS. PRO-MARKET POLITICIANS EITHER REMAIN QUIET OR TALK ABOUT THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE EC, AND PRO-MARKET PROPAGANDISTS HAVE ALREADY FALLEN BACK TO THE ARGUMENT THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD BE TOO COSTLY (LONDON A-116, FEBRUARY 5, 1974). AGAINST THE STRIDENT AND EMOTIONAL XENOPHOBIA OF THE ANTI-MARKETEERS, THIS ARGUMENT WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO HOLD THE FIELD IN A SHOWDOWN WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY.

7. IT WOULD BE RASH TO TRY TO PREDICT PRECISELY HOW

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WILSON MIGHT ACTUALLY HANDLE THIS ISSUE IF HE DID GET BACK TO NUMBER TEN, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW EVEN HE COULD EVADE THE REPEATED COMMITMENTS HE HAS MADE TO NEGOTIATE TOUGH NEW TERMS AND THEN CONSULT THE ELECTORATE. WHATEVER HIS PERSONAL PREFERENCES, THE PARTY WOULD NEVER LET HIM OFF THE HOOK. COUNTERVALING INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS COULD, OF COURSE, COME INTO PLAY, AND IN THE END THE BRITISH VOTERS MIGHT DECIDE TO STAY IN THE MARKET AFTER ALL, BUT AS THINGS NOW STAND, IT SHOULD BE FRANKLY RECOGNIZED THAT A LABOR VICTORY ON FEBRUARY 28 MIGHT WELL TRIGGER A CHAIN OF CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF BRITAIN FROM THE EC.

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